

Participation checklist

The following checklists provide guidance on things you may wish to consider in applying each of the principles in practice when developing approaches to ensure the active and ethical participation of children, young people and adult survivors. The checklists are not intended to be exhaustive, and each acknowledge that every activity will have its own unique considerations.

In some sections of the checklists, it is recognised that engagement with children, young people and survivors requires different approaches to implement successfully. Where relevant, differences in best practice are highlighted.

Before the Project:

- ☐ Before beginning any participatory work, ensure your organisation has an up-to-date safeguarding and child protection policy, reviewed by those with safeguarding expertise.
- ☐ From the beginning of any project working with children, young people and survivors, be transparent and clear about the project goals and what you hope to learn from them as participants. Ensure children, young people and survivors understand why they are part of the project, including having an open conversation about terminology. For example, 'online child sexual exploitation and abuse' and 'participation' are not terms that all children, young people and survivors may understand or engage with.
- ☐ Ensure communication and promotional materials clearly describe the activity and the type of participation being sought and that materials are accessible to all who may be interested.
- ☐ Ensure children, young people and survivors are provided with adequate information in the promotion of your opportunity so they can best decide for themselves if they want to participate.
- ☐ Before engaging with potential participants, consider resourcing and budgets and ensure they support equitable and accessible participation. Budgets need to consider fair remuneration for participant's time, and expenses such as travel, special needs, food, accommodation etc, as well as support for children, young people and survivors if needed. Ensure your budget has room for contingencies. Staff resourcing and time commitments should also be realistic.
- ☐ During your planning phase, complete a:
 - ☐ Risk assessment
 - ☐ Diversity and equity assessment of your activities
 - ☐ Trauma-informed design assessment (both when engaging children, young people and survivors)

- ☐ Child and youth-centred programme design tool for child and youth activities (if you are aiming to engage with children and youth)
- ☐ Adjust all activities based on results. In some cases, assessment means you need to reconsider if it is appropriate to conduct the work, especially if a project is high-risk with weak mitigation strategies.
- ☐ Assess if you need external or additional expertise to support your project e.g. trained facilitators, trauma-informed experts, project advisors with lived experience.
- ☐ Consider any generational, cultural or knowledge gaps or bias that you may need to address before embarking on this project (for example, a perception that online child sexual abuse is not as serious as contact abuse, lack of understanding about platforms).
- ☐ In the best case, participants should be remunerated, this remuneration should be accessible and equitable.
- ☐ Assess the demographics of children, young people and survivors you aim to work with to ensure there is representation and diversity.
- ☐ Ensure there are clear principles and ethical guidelines describing how the process of participation will be conducted, and that this is shared with all individuals involved in the project.

Choose venues or spaces children, young people and survivors can easily access and where they will feel safe and comfortable. Involve them in selecting venues, the activities and creating a safe space for their participation during the planning stage. This includes online spaces and platforms.

- ☐ In the initial activity or activity design, consider the best approach to engage a broad range of participants to prepare for different needs and engagement styles.

1. Child protection and safeguarding checklist

- ☐ Ensure everyone in your team has appropriate safeguarding training, clearance and/or guidance to work with under 18s and those with lived experience of child sexual abuse. Ensure everyone in your team is aware of and is assigned specific responsibilities to safeguard and protect throughout the activities.
- ☐ Based on your organisations child protection and safeguarding policy, ensure you are clear on who should and should not be in direct contact with children, young people and survivors in your organisation.
- ☐ Consider whether ethical clearance from a formal body or safeguarding experts is required if there are high risks or additional support needs.

- ☐ Consider how you will store personal data and information relating to children, young people and survivors. How will this be protected, and who has access to it?
- ☐ Fully brief the children and/or survivors about the activity, put in place support plans if they have any safety issues or concerns, and ensure participants know how to access this support. Some participants may be able to advise on their safety needs themselves.
- ☐ Develop an aftercare process, including what to do if participants need any support after the project or activity concludes.
- ☐ Consider how activities integrate with existing safeguarding systems and reporting mechanisms set up in your project, e.g. ensure participants are aware of support services and reporting pathways if these are not provided in the project (e.g. information on hotlines, referral services) and ensure these are safe and reputable.
- ☐ Create a space for children, young people and survivors to feel safe and comfortable to participate by drafting a safe space agreement with your participants that everyone who engages in the project has a responsibility to uphold and protect.

Survivor Engagement	Child (and Youth) Engagement
<input type="checkbox"/> ALWAYS offer anonymity or the use of a pseudonym especially when working with adult survivors or those with lived experience over 18.	<input type="checkbox"/> Children and young people may also want to use a pseudonym when the project is being promoted externally. They can also engage anonymously e.g. in polls. However, please always note your child protection and legal responsibilities to report any child protection concerns when engaging with children and youth.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure parents/guardians or supporting individuals are briefed on and involved in the activity to support safeguarding. Remember parental/guardian consent is mandatory for under 18s to participate in any activity.

2. Autonomy and agency checklist

- ☐ Before you start any activity, ensure information and discussions about participating in the activity are clear, open, and informed. This should enable children, young people and survivors to make the best decision for themselves as to whether they want to participate in the project. Fully explain to participants:

- Who is running the activity/project
 - Why the activity is being undertaken
 - What data is being collected, how it is being used, how it is being stored and the date/timeline for destroying the information in line with legal requirements.
 - Be clear and transparent about how participants will be kept informed, and where appropriate consulted on how the information they share will be used over time (if appropriate).
 - What will happen during the activity.
 - How the results will be used and who they will be shared with.
 - Who is observing the activity, and if the activity is being recorded and why this approach is being adopted (with specific emphasis to ensure participants have agreed to any approach adopted).
 - What support will be offered if participants feel triggered, overwhelmed or experiences harm during or after the activity.
- ☐ Ensure children, young people and survivors understand their role and data usage before, during and after the project. Asking them to describe this to you can be a useful way to check the project requirements have been understood.
- ☐ Ensure informed consent has been obtained formally, is recorded and is reviewed. If the nature of the project changes from the initially described activity, you should discuss these changes with participants and ensure they still wish to give informed consent
- ☐ Ensure children, young people and survivors understand their participation is voluntary, and that they can stop or withdraw their consent at any time during the project without repercussions. This includes before, during and after the activity or project. This includes the right to withdraw consent even after publication if they no longer want their views or content used.
- ☐ With participants, regularly demonstrate and evidence how their insights and views are shaping the project or activity.
- ☐ Throughout the project, hold regular check-ins to review how the project is going and discuss if changes are needed to accommodate any developing needs and desires of the children, young people and survivors.

3. Equity and empowerment checklist

- ☐ Discuss what children, young people and survivors want to gain from their participation and integrate this into the activity design e.g. would they like to develop a particular skill, or have some of their work amplified to a specific audience for advocacy.

- ☐ Use your diversity and equity assessment to review the demographics of children, young people and survivors you aim to work with to ensure there is adequate representation and diversity.
- ☐ Consider identity-based considerations and what might need to be in place for everyone based on their individual circumstances (More on this in checklist 4).
- ☐ Consider how you will adapt to different and preferred ways of working so views can be shared. Not everyone may be comfortable voicing their views in the same way so consider different methods to engage participants like writing notes, drawing, role play, recording etc. Some activities could be done individually or in group settings.
- ☐ Ensure children, young people and survivors are given the necessary knowledge, skills development, and information to participate in activities to a level that aligns with their own developmental or aspirational goals.

4. Adaptability and accessibility checklist

- ☐ Ensure everyone is given a consistent onboarding process so they have access to the same standard of information, briefings and resources.
- ☐ Complete an individual needs assessment with the children, young people and survivors you want to engage and ensure any identified needs are supported. One approach is to provide a questionnaire that helps them to express their identity, needs for safety, empowerment and achieving development goals.
- ☐ Based on needs assessment results, adapt the project content and activities where necessary. For example, some participants may need formats or language to be adapted.
- ☐ Consider the timing of your activities or project and plan your delivery timeframes to allow for meaningful participation rather than working to organisational deadlines.
- ☐ Review how your project/activity timeline works with children, young people and survivors' own commitments and responsibilities; Some participants may need to engage in activities over a longer time, or they may need regular breaks from intensive work.
- ☐ Be mindful of favouring your usual preferred work practices over the preferences of children, young people and survivors. The way you engage in this project or activity may be different to your traditional ways of working but may work best for children, young people and survivors.
- ☐ Whether an activity is online, in person or run in some other way, consider participant needs and how you can enable equal participation. For example, a participant may have a learning difficulty, hearing loss or other needs which could have an impact on the way you design activities.

5. Child-centred and trauma-informed checklist

- ☐ Due to the nature of the harm of online-facilitated child sexual abuse, there may be additional complexities that need to be considered. You should be mindful of the fact that work may be re-traumatising. We do not know the nature of the abuse that a victim or child has experienced. Being sensitive to the needs of all survivors, known and unknown, is imperative.
- ☐ When engaging in this work be mindful of emotions that may be triggered, and which may lead to behaviours and responses that you were not expecting. In needs assessments or discussion, it is important to understand what makes children, young people and survivors feel safe and comfortable.
- ☐ Appropriate wellbeing support and referral mechanisms must be in place. Participants should be made aware how to access this support at the start of the project. Ensure there are no barriers in place that would make accessing this support challenging or uncomfortable.
- ☐ Consider opportunities beyond your current project or activity to ensure work is not tokenistic. Ensure there is a sustainability plan for ongoing involvement, providing opportunities for survivors or children to influence and shape the services that have a direct impact on their outcomes.

Survivor Engagement	Child (and Youth) Engagement
<input type="checkbox"/> Note individual boundaries and triggers for everyone, ensuring your activities are designed in a way that takes these into account. For example, some individuals might want to participate anonymously or with a pseudonym. Some may not wish to engage in specific project elements or will want to participate with a support individual, and some may not want their image being captured	<input type="checkbox"/> Use empowering child and youth-centred approaches and methods of participation that are engaging, relevant, age-appropriate, flexible and creative. Recognise that your participants may be the experts about how they would like to be engaged and what works best for them.

After the Project:

- ☐ Ensure participants know how to engage with the aftercare process.
- ☐ When the activity or project finishes, ensure there is a meaningful evaluation and feedback process that could be in the form of a debrief or an after-event review that empowers children, young people and survivors to express themselves.
- ☐ Inform participants on how you will remain accountable to them about the use of their work going forward.
- ☐ Inform participants how their information will be used, stored and destroyed in line with legal data protection and statutory requirements.

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